

Vatican II: some lessons and some points on inculturation

Vatican II has taught me to calibrate my life as a worshipper of Shakti. Christianity in India has calibrated itself to Hindu ashram ideals. Bede Griffiths is just one prototypical example. Similarly, I believe that we Hindus have much to learn from Vatican II. For Hindus who are reading this, first reckon with the fact that I am an initiated Shakti upasak. Hinduism does not get more radical than within Tantra. Tantric initiation is not open to the general Hindu. Further, I am a regular writer at ESamskriti. So, my Hindu credentials are more Hindu than even those of staunch Hindus. Many of my days and nights are spent at the charnel ground at Tarapith and elsewhere. As a person of Faith, who is unabashedly a proud Hindu these are my takeaways from Vatican II. I see much merit in the following points:

- In my personal life I do not dress in the red or black attire of my marga. It is unnecessary. The transformation should be within and not merely without. It is very important to not stand out in a holier-than-thou attitude. The aim of our religious praxes is kenosis. Not a display of our egos. This is something I understood from Vatican II. We need to adapt to the signs of the times.
- While we need to know Sanskrit since it is understood in my marga that Sanskrit letters have transformative powers and are called bija mantras (root syllables), much like the Hesychast method; we need a concerted effort to translate everything in Sanskrit into English. The Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II has convinced me of this need.
- Long ago I had read the late Pope Benedict XVI who pointed out that his Church did not need more Catholics. The Roman Church needed more authentic Catholics. I have learnt from Vatican II documents and the late Pope that we Hindus must not be afraid of lesser number of Hindus. We only need authentic Hindus who are willing to lay down their lives for their Faith.
- Vatican II stressed the importance of the

laity within the Roman Church. Now I see that while most of our Hindu populace cannot and should not practise Shakti upasana; yet we need more Hindus to be aware of the liturgies of Tanta.

- Vatican II has taught me servant-leadership. We are none of us to judge others and they alone are community leaders who choose to serve others first. The role of the Guru is entirely different in my religion, and we need spiritual directors in my religion too. Fr. Adrian van Kaam's pioneering work leading to the establishment of the discipline of Formative Spirituality would not have been possible without Vatican II. In Hinduism too, we need spiritual formators.
- Most importantly, I have learnt of the need for dialogue from Vatican II. We cannot be isolated communities bound up in our own dogmatic worlds. In short, I see the need for more Fr. Anthony de Mellos today than ever before.

We forget that paths to sanctity are not confined to a particular community alone. No religious community has a birthright to their religious scriptures. Vatican II teaches us that all things which are good and holy belong to all humanity. Pope Francis is often criticised for his liberality. On the contrary, I find many of his insights to be humane and honest. For instance, the current Pope unceasingly advocates mercy and openness towards others. He is anti-xenophobic. He is constantly asking forgiveness for historical wrongs done by the Catholic Church. This makes me introspect: what are the wrongs that we have done as a Faith community? We cannot change the past; but we can at least ask forgiveness of the evils that we committed. Asking forgiveness is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of strength.

For we are all pilgrims of Hope who seek the same Omega Point. Om Shantih, shantih, shantih.